

Magazine Feature Section

Are You Prepared For War?

Then What Battle Flag Is This?

If you are interested in the present great war and the talk of preparedness that is agitating so many Americans, do you happen to know what is the battle flag of that country?

If you have pictured the fleets of that nation sweeping onward to final victory in some great climax, are you sure that you also visualize the right ensign that will be flying when the enemies' ships go down?

Possibly you have drawn some image, mentally, of a flag of gorgeous hue floating over the vessels you read about in the papers as having won or lost victories, either in the North Sea, off the coast of Chile or at the Falkland Islands.

But did that image convey the fact that the prevailing color of the most important battle flags in the present struggle was white?

White has always been regarded as the emblem of surrender, when applied to a flag.

Yet, when seen from a distance of little more than one mile, the German, the British and the Russian battle flags on naval vessels give the impression of being white with an indistinct design on their face. The Japanese flag, with its rising sun, at an equal distance seems like a dingy drab.

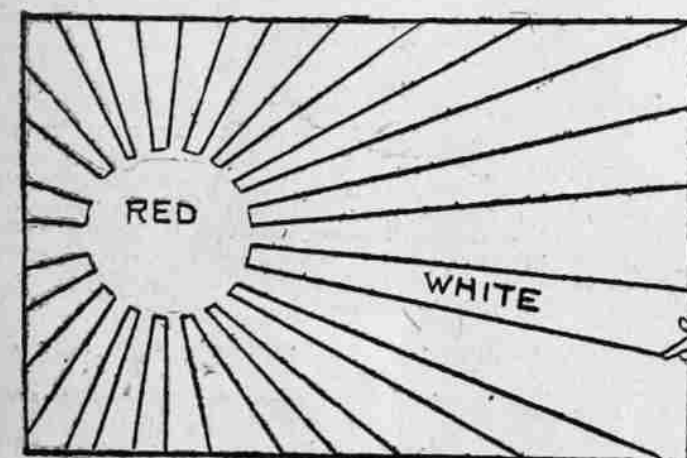
Yet so accustomed are spectators to the brilliance and glitter of military pageants on land, designed to be viewed at short range, that they fail to realize that the same emblems under which the grimmest battles are fought at sea, are of a predominating white in color.

Our own American flag, which is the same whether it flies over warships or merchant vessels, doubtless has caused this impression among our citizens. Possibly comparatively few in our population would recognize our customs flag if they saw it, but as that is not a battle flag it cuts no figure here. It may be remarked, however, that the stripes run up and down the flag instead of along its length, and that the corner contains a black American eagle with thirteen black stars on a white ground. Instead of the familiar blue ground, with a star for every state, such as flies over Uncle Sam's merchantmen and warships.

Battle Flags Not Recognized

POSSIBLY many readers may recall at a St. Louis theater last winter the performance of a Japanese juggler and magician, one of whose tricks was the production of a number of national flags of different nations from a box, apparently empty, that he had put together on the stage. The act was not especially new, but the war sympathy that was apparent in fashions of the audience caused him to be warmly applauded.

Of course, he worked up his dramatic climax to the end, when he laid out the American flag. But, at the outset, he commenced to produce flags of other nations, seemingly from empty



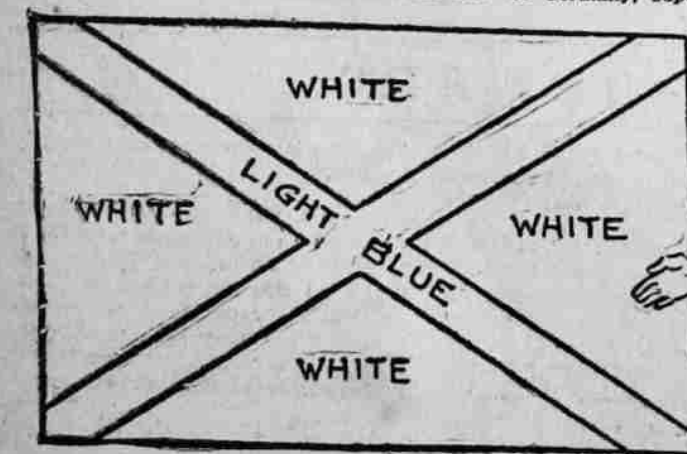
AND THIS?



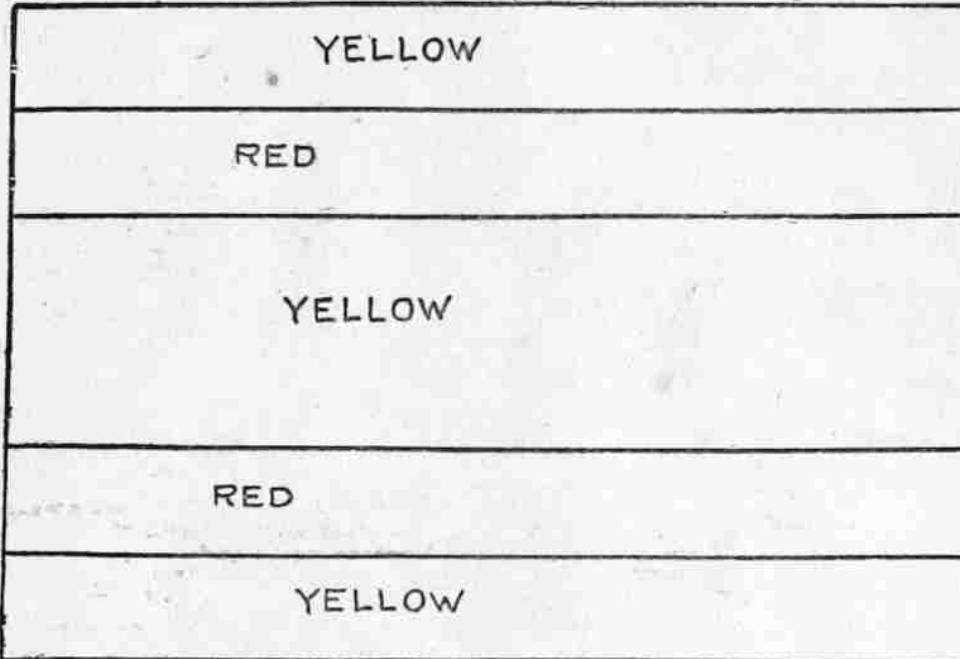
space, and to array them along a table before him. First came the familiar tricolor of France, which was greeted with a round of fervent clapping of hands; the Belgian red, blue and yellow also received a sympathetic reception. But when a red flag with the British Union Jack in the corner and another tricolor, this time red, white and black, were laid out, the spectators of opposing sympathies vied with each other in seeing which could make the most noise.

Then, with a sardonic smile, the juggler laid out a white flag with a red cross upon it and a blue square in the upper corner; there was some perfunctory applause by people who evidently did not want to seem to overlook a bet, but perplexity was indicated in the half-heartedness of the hand claps. Another flag followed with white predominating in its colors even more—this was a white ground with a black cross and a corner in which red, black and white figured. There was more hesitating applause. The juggler's stage effect seemed to have been lost un-

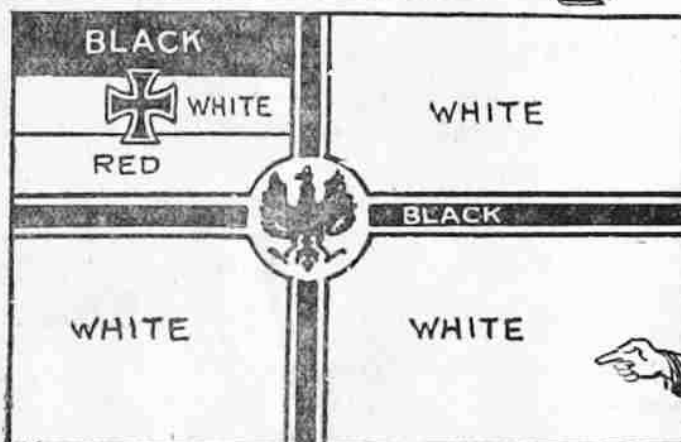
sunk some ships of Admiral Craddock's squadron off the coast of Chile, is so nearly white that its black and red markings are indistinct at short distance away. On a pure white ground is a black cross, with an upper corner nearest the flag pole of black, white and red, in that order, with a Maltese Cross, like the Iron Cross of Germany, superimposed at the lower edge.



WHAT FLAG IS THIS?



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THEN WHAT IS THIS?



AND THIS?



In the center of the cross, which covers the face of the flag, is a circle in which appear the German eagles.

The Russian battle flag that flew over Admiral Rojevsky's fleet when it went down before Togo, is white with a thin blue cross, running from corner to corner of the snowy field—the Greek cross. This naval flag has more white upon it than either of the other two.

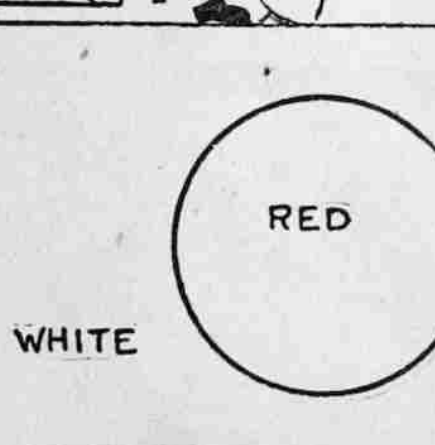
The Japanese flag in certain lights looks almost white. When any of these flags appear over the horizon, glasses have to be used to distinguish the markings which point out the nationality. The Greek battle flag is so light a shade of blue stripes on white that it seems drab at a distance.

An Advertising Joke

Of course, when we picture our own American flag banner fluttering above a warship, we naturally think of its colors, which are unmistakable at a far greater distance than any other important national emblem can be recognized.

Yet about the only nation whose flag would live up to our visions of gorgeous coloring and that is now involved in the present outbreak is Turkey!

The "bloody rag" of England, about which our forefathers made fervent addresses in revolutionary days, would be gazed at blankly by the average American schoolboy who had never seen the battle emblem. The scarlet flag of Turkey, with its star and crescent, would come nearer his idea of Britain's flag, because, possibly through seeing the British merchant marine flag in pictures so often, he has confused red with the battle color.



THEN WHAT IS THIS?

In fact, one advertising concern got out a series of colored pictures, which for artistic effect seemed to represent the hopes of some ambitious sign painter, which purported to give views of battles in which the British fleet had engaged.

of the fact, the brighter and more striking coloring of many merchant flags of the great nations, as compared to the battle flag, may have been a matter of convenience—for more ready identification at sea.

Those who witnessed the World's Fair Handicap, run in St. Louis during 1904, can probably recall a case of how colors that were striking at close range became indistinguishable across the infield. This was the case of the Thomas colors on Hermis, winner of the Suburban Handicap of that year, who was sent West especially to win the fair event, but who only got second place.

Announcement was made in the papers that one of the women members of the Thomas family had selected the colors. They were steel gray and pink, and doubtless at some time had made a favorable impression in some lady's gown. When Hermis was chasing down the back stretch, however, they were an indistinguishable blur. Unless those following the fortunes of Hermis had watched his position from the start, there was nothing to distinguish his colors from two or three others in the field—the white with black stripes of Baker, for instance.

Bad Mistake Almost Made

AN instance of this mistake, due to a flag probably having been designed in the old days when battleships moved up alongside of each other to exchange broadsides, was given in the Spanish-American war, immediately after the battle off Santiago, when Cervera's fleet and fortunes went down before the guns of Sampson's men.

The Oregon was pursuing the flying vessels when smoke was seen upon the horizon. Admiral Sampson, who was following the other ships in the cruiser New York (now the Saratoga), and who was just reaching a point opposite the mouth of the harbor at the time, signalled to the battleship Indiana to meet the newcomer.

The Indiana watched the oncoming vessel carefully and its officers became convinced that it must be the battleship Pelayo, which rumor

much of an identification at such ranges.

Old Glory Is the Plainest

AS has been said, the American flag can be distinguished at probably greater distances than any other, as even the bright red of Turkey's flag is apt to become confused with the British merchant marine emblem at long distances.

Merritt C. Holley of Traverse City, Mich., who is an expert on flags and who delivers lectures upon the subject, said that the colors of red, white and blue were probably not chosen for any especial significance for our present national emblem, as they had already existed in the Washington coat of arms and the British flag. They simply were selected because they made the best combination of colors possible. The significance in our flag came in its stripes for the thirteen original states and the stars for each state.

One of our early flags, the "rattlesnake flag," which was marked by a coiled rattlesnake, even had lettered inscriptions upon it which would not show to any great distance today.

Reporter Inspires New Flag

OF course, stories weave themselves about every flag of national reputation. But there is one about the flag of the Chinese Republic, which may or may not be a lasting emblem; that the writer has never seen in print. As authority, the writer has T. J. Conely, formerly sergeant in Troop D of the Fourteenth Cavalry, when that regiment was in the Philippines.

And prominently displayed at the military masts—where they wouldn't float in battle because of furnishing an aiming point for the enemy's fire—was the red merchant flag of England.

Flags of Olden Days

IN the olden days, when battles were fought at close range and when two hostile forces would frequently encamp just beyond bowshot of each other, the art of heraldry was at its highest point. To the College of Heralds many national flags doubtless owe their markings. The armorial bearings of those days were often placed on standards and were readily discernable at the distance at which battles were fought.

Some of these emblems, such as the one on the white portion of the Austrian flag, might have been easily recognizable in the days when the musket carried scarcely further than the long bow, but they cause considerable confusion nowadays.

Full advantage of this fact is taken in the present war by submarine commanders of both sides, who claim that they cannot distinguish between certain flags, even on merchant vessels.

Even in the days of coat armor, there was one provision of heraldry that was in dispute. This was the matter of imposing "metal upon metal" in a coat of arms. Walter Scott makes mention of this in "Ivanhoe," as in the appendix to that work he explains why he gave the Knight of the Fetterlock a coat of arms in which one metallic design was shown over another.

Probably even at that early day, when battling was so largely hand to hand, confusion could readily arise by a coat of arms having a silver design upon burnished metal of some other sort, which would be confused in the rays of the sun.

Also, while there is no apparent written proof

had it was on the way across the Atlantic to re-enforce Cervera's squadron.

The call to quarters was blown, the range was carefully taken and the men had actually been given the command "stand by" as a preface to the command to fire, when it was discovered that the battle flag was that of Austria.

The Austrian flag is red, white, red, in three divisions, with a coat of arms on the white field. The Spanish flag was red, yellow, red. Only the fact that battles were not opened at such long ranges in those days prevented the Indiana from letting the visitors have a broadside, with following complications for Uncle Sam.

It might be added that the red, white and blue of Italy could also be confused with several other flags in which the tricolor predominates at the ranges at which battles are fought nowadays. It will be recalled that in the North Sea battle, when the Bluecher was sunk, the visiting raiders were identified by means of their structural design, which distinguished them from English ships, and firing opened at a range of nine and one-half miles.

The report of the Bluecher's medical officer, who was rescued, shows that, as his vessel had lower military masts than those on the British cruisers, the Britons were able to get the range first, as every additional height above the sea level gives just that much greater range of vision. And he said that the first shot which hit the Bluecher, fired at extreme range and plunging down from the sky, came from a ship they could not even see. "Flags would not be

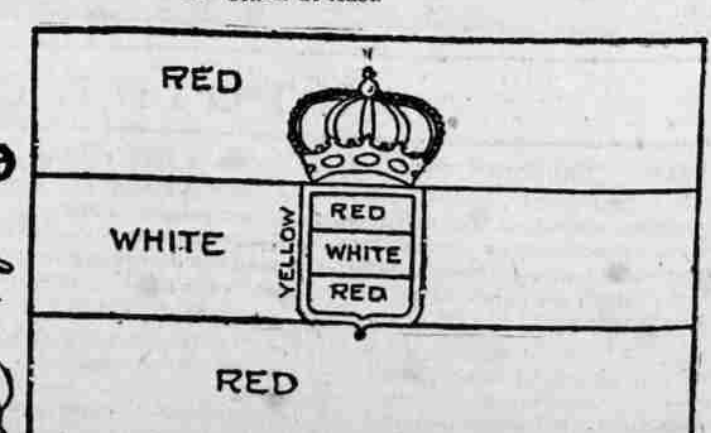
It will be recalled that Dr. Sun Yat Yen's associates had opened quarters in Manila while organizing their republic. When their movement seemed successful, an American newspaper man on the Manila Cable-News American, called at the office seeking information. They told him they were considering a flag.

Just outside the windows, in Manila Bay, the Sheridan and Thompson were lying, both of them United States transports. In 1911, when the Chinese rebellion was well under way, American war vessels as well as transports in tropical waters were painted white. The prevailing color of smokestacks and masts were a light buff or yellow, with a black band around the top of the smokestacks.

To distinguish a transport, a red, white and blue band is still painted around their stacks. This left a black band of equal width in the markings, upon the buff-colored funnel.

Conely, who accompanied the reporter, says that the latter pointed out of the window at the ships. "There's a striking enough color combination," he said, "those bands in just that order." One month later, the five-striped Chinese Republic flag was launched with bands of black, red, white, blue and yellow upon it. They ran in the same order as upon the funnels of an American army transport. It is possible, as was formally announced at the time, that each stripe represents a different division of China—black standing for Manchuria and yellow for Mongolia, for instance. But the oddity of the design and the fact that it follows the order of markings on the stacks of our vessels is a coincidence, at least.

AND THIS?



- No. 1—Spanish royal navy, or battle flag.
- No. 2—Spanish mercantile marine.
- No. 3—German imperial navy, or battle flag.
- No. 4—Imperial navy of Japan.
- No. 5—German mercantile marine.
- No. 6—Japan mercantile marine.
- No. 7—Great Britain royal navy, white ensign, or battle flag.
- No. 8—Russian imperial navy, or battle flag.
- No. 9—Austria-Hungary imperial navy.